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THIRD INTER-AMERICAN ELECTORAL TRAINING SEMINAR SEPTEMBER 6 – 10, 2010 MEXICO, DF

WORK DOCUMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inter-American Electoral Training is an initiative led by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) in collaboration with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLASCO). These training seminars are events designed to promote the improvement of the organization and administration of the electoral processes and systems throughout the hemisphere.

To this end, this year's conference: the "Third Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar" that will take place from 6th to the 10th of September in Mexico City focuses on two main themes: 1) strategic planning for Electoral Management Bodies and 2) geo-referencing for electoral purposes. The Training Seminar's methodology consists of two areas: (a) it offers academic and technical training facilitated by professors and experts in the field, and (b) it strengthens discussions and horizontal cooperation among electoral authorities with extensive experience in these areas.

In order to generate practical improvements by way of the seminar, each scholarship participant should formulate concrete action initiatives, based on the principal themes of the Training Seminar, which will contribute to the improvement of a specific practice or incorporate innovation into the institutional practices within their area of responsibility.

To achieve continued application of the training objectives, the seminar will be followed up in the following three ways: (a) the dissemination of the seminar's materials and presentations through the Inter-American Network of Electoral Information and Practices [RIPE for its Spanish acronym] (b) follow-up on the projects developed by the participants;

and (c) development of virtual courses (distance learning tools) to better disseminate the knowledge and information shared among the participants.

BACKGROUND

The first phase of international electoral technical cooperation by the OAS occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, and allowed for the establishment of electoral authorities as the institutions responsible for organizing and administering elections. This is to say, international organizations, such as the OAS, helped establish these entities as electoral management bodies and contributed to providing them with the basic infrastructure needed to organize elections. This was a long and comprehensive process that accompanied the establishment of many of the electoral management bodies in the Americas.

The phase of technical cooperation from the OAS to electoral authorities, which is currently in progress, focuses on addressing the principal challenge that these currently face: institutional capacity-building. This challenge is addressed from three levels. The first level deals with human development for electoral authorities. In other words, to continuously professionalize the electoral management bodies staff members' abilities with respect to the diverse aspects related to the administration of the electoral process. The second level focuses on institutional and organizational development, understood as the fine-tuning of legal and operational frameworks that allow officials to apply their acquired skills to the electoral process. Finally, the third level focuses on technical development; in other words, developing the technical tools that allow electoral authorities to meet the demands of the electoral process within the specific context of each country.

In order to contribute to strengthening the electoral management bodies' work, as part of an institutional restructuring of the political area of the OAS General Secretariat, two years ago the GS/OAS established the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO), which is in charge of supporting electoral systems and institutions throughout the region. Through its operational sections, DECO seeks to collaborate with the electoral management bodies to strengthen their administrative, technical, legal, and institutional capacities, as well as to identify and disseminate information about good practices.

One of the initiatives promoted by DECO to strengthen the organization and administration of the electoral processes and systems in the region is the institutionalization of the Inter-American Electoral Training Seminars. The first one was held in 2008, and since then, the conferences have been a continuous exercise conducted annually.

These Conferences through a process of exercises at technical and academic levels contribute to the professionalization of the electoral authorities in the region and promote horizontal cooperation. In fact, the main challenge that the training seminars intend to deal with is the need for mechanisms for the continuous professionalization of the electoral

authority, all aimed at strengthening the skills of the members and officials of the electoral bodies. Thus, the training seminars are academic and practical exercises that help improve the organization of electoral processes in the continent.

In the context of achieving the objectives previously mentioned, and considering the issues identified in the consultation carried out with the electoral authorities in Washington, DC, on this Third Inter-American Training Seminar, two main topics that were identified as key topics will be addressed.

The Third Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar is an initiative led by the OAS General Secretariat in collaboration with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), and the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLASCO), in order to take advantage of their varied experience facilitating the organization and execution of the initiative. Each of these organizations contributes an academic and technical area of expertise, along with vast international experience.

The Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE) is a permanent, public, autonomous organism, independent in its decisions and operations, that is responsible for organizing federal elections in Mexico. The IFE was created by a constitutional mandate in October 1990. Its operations are guided by five fundamental principles: certainty, legality, independence, impartiality, and objectivity. Since its formation in 1993 until now, the IFE's International Affairs Coordination has actively promoted technical electoral cooperation at the international level. Through different agreements and accords with diverse international organizations and electoral management bodies from other nations, IFE has participated in technical assistance and electoral observation missions in over 15 countries throughout the Americas. Furthermore, IFE has organized various official visits on behalf of international organizations and electoral organisms of other countries, and has carried out diverse events to promote democracy and electoral training, including through publications. IFE's contribution towards this activity is based on its vast experience in technical coordination of conferences, seminars, forums, courses, and workshops that utilize an interdisciplinary perspective and comparative electoral analysis, facilitating horizontal cooperation between different interest groups at an international level.

For its part, in 2007, the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), celebrated 50 years of contributing to equality, social inclusion, democracy, and international cooperation between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Since its creation on April 16, 1957 in Santiago, Chile, through a UNESCO initiative, FLACSO has directed research, teaching, scientific dissemination, and technical cooperation throughout the region. In 1975, FLACSO adopted a decentralized system and as a result has created new head offices throughout the continent. Currently, the FLACSO system includes Academic Head Offices in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and programs in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. The General Secretariat is located in San Jose, Costa Rica. FLACSO contributes to the Training Seminar with its

academic and methodological weight; it has broad experience in linking teaching with research, within a broad plurality of theoretic and methodological perspectives.

Finally, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) was founded in 1995 as intergovernmental organization, with 25 member states, that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. Its objective is to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. For its part, International IDEA offers strength in the areas of knowledge resources, in the form of expert networks, databases, handbooks and websites; policy proposals to incite debate and action on democracy; and assistance with democratic reform in response to specific national requests. It works together with policy makers, donor governments, UN organizations and agencies, regional organizations, and others engaged in democracy building. Areas of expertise include: electoral processes, political representation processes, constitution-building processes, democracy and gender, democracy and security and democracy assessments. International IDEA works worldwide. Based in Stockholm, Sweden, it also has offices in New York and Brussels, Africa, Asia-Pacific and an extensive regional program in Latin America.

METHODOLOGY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The methodology of the Training Seminar is built around four defined objectives. In the first place, the course provides high-level academic and technical training from professionals and experts in the field for electoral management body staff members. The second objective of the Training Seminar is to encourage horizontal cooperation among electoral management bodies. In order to achieve this goal, activities will be conducted which involve discussions and exchange of experiences. The third objective is the delivery of technical tools to participants, with the aim of implementing changes and improvements in their particular national contexts. The final objective is the practical application of the information shared, carried out through the development of improvement proposals on behalf of participants.

STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINAR

The introduction of the Training Seminar themes will be raised in plenary sessions during the mornings, followed by open discussions to address participants' questions. Afterwards, the seminar will hold discussion panels where presenters will have the opportunity to expand upon the day's theme. In order to discuss the sub-themes identified as priorities for the Training Seminar, these panels will comprise professors, practitioners, and international cooperation representatives.

These sessions will be followed by the identification of principal problems that arise within the countries of the participating electoral management bodies. The idea is that based on the training provided in the seminar, participants can identify problems and develop strategies that will allow them to develop and propose possible solutions. Towards the end of the course, participants will submit a proposal that will serve as the basis for subsequent work based on training provided in the seminar.

During the final two days of the Training Seminar, a workshop called “Demolatina” will be carried out, consisting of a real case simulation exercise within the working groups. This will allow different participant groups to confront common problems by assuming different rolls and applying the knowledge acquired throughout the Training Seminar to the resolution of the problem raised.

APPLYING THE THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE TO REGIONAL EXPERIENCES

To conclude, participants will have the opportunity to identify practical applications for the most significant characteristics of the two particular themes, by allowing them to create proposals for realistic solution necessary to improve their country’s challenges (in a specific national context). The emphasis of these proposals will be the formulation of projects that may be carried out in all of the participating countries.

Towards the end of the seminar, participants will hand in their proposals that will serve as the basis for the implementation of the projects and follow up work after the seminar. These projects are also instrumental for the following up and monitoring by the SG/OAS after the seminar; as all participants are required to provide at least one report on the progress made in the implementation of the projects six months after the seminar.

GENERAL CURRICULUM

The general curriculum for the Third Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar consists of developing a general framework regarding the role of electoral authorities in strengthening governance and democracy in their respective countries. Within this framework, it is hoped to go into depth on the following sub-issues:

The Role of the Electoral Authority

The role of the electoral authority has changed within the last couple of years, transforming from a technical organism responsible for electoral logistics, to a central organ of governance. This new model brings greater acknowledgment of its role as an entity which facilitates civic participation in the practice of democracy, and, should search for avenues to perfect its links with other entities or governmental actors such as legislators, political

parties, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, public opinion, and the mass media, among others.

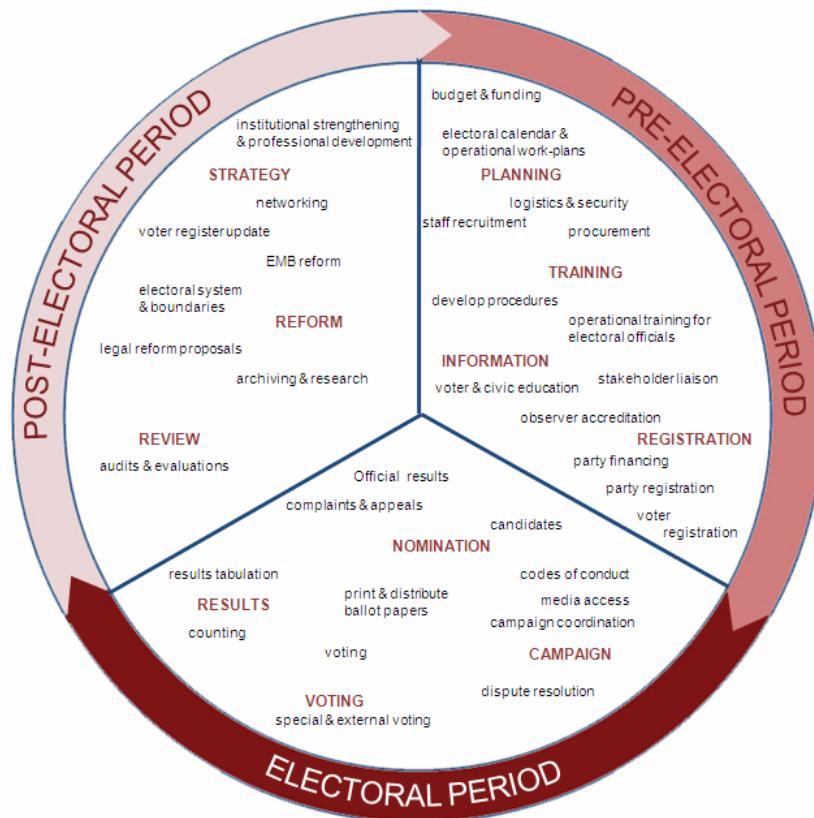
The Role of the Electoral Authority during Electoral Periods

As a relevant institution for governance, the electoral authority complies with key functions during the electoral period which are beyond that of preparing and organizing Election Day. The electoral process is comprised of a series of linked phases, each of which is identifiable with different interests groups interacting and exercising their influence on others. Therefore, a failure in one of the components, for example, lack of capacity to create a reliable voter registry, could impact negatively on the right of citizens to vote, which could imply low voter participation and deteriorate the credibility of the electoral authority. This is precisely why links within the electoral period, including aspects such as human and financial resources, the availability of materials, transportation, as well as training and security, influence the credibility of the election.¹

During the electoral period, the electoral authority should strengthen its relations with diverse institutions of the State, such as Ministries or other dependent and autonomous entities. These relations contribute to maintaining the presence of the authority in different areas such as boosting civic participation and the good management of technical processes for electoral disputes. Some key actors should also coordinate matters such as electoral education, the registry, as well as technology and logistics that are implemented during Election Day, among others. In this manner, the objective of analyzing the electoral period is centered on electoral authorities planning and executing their work in the long term, instead of reacting to each electoral event, in order to progressively achieve the perfection of the electoral system².

¹ ACE Project http://aceproject.org/ace-es/focus/fo_eea/foe_eea-electoral-cycle-approach

² More information on the Electoral Period is found in the European Commission, UN Development Program http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=31



Achieving all of the work associated with the electoral period involves deploying human and financial resources which can be difficult for countries with limited resources, or which do not have electoral offices with permanent personnel. However, there are possibilities to achieve the general objective of the period in some primordial aspects through identifying strategic counterparts or alliances that can assist in this process. An example includes civic education strategies aimed at youth organized through agreements with ministries of education that allow youth tribunals in schools.

Transparency and “Accountability”

In the last decade throughout the region the implementation of transparent processes and auditing has taken strength. Promoting these values is a pillar for democratic governance as it contributes to improving relations between the State and its citizens as well as a method to oversee corruption and increase responsibility of civil servants. Recognizing the importance of these objectives has materialized successively through mandates and documents stemming from political bodies from the Organization of American States and in national legislation adopted by a number of growing countries³. Nevertheless, after the

³ Presentation from, “Guide for Mechanisms that Promote Transparency and Integrity in Countries of the Americas,” 2009, OAS http://www.oas.org/sap/espanol/cpo_guia.asp

implementation of norms in countries of the region, the challenge is executing them effectively⁴.

Issues of transparency and accountability are treated within a state framework and that of the support by the electoral authority. Together efforts by countries of the region to bring transparency to processes and institutions are intimately linked to obtaining the credibility of the public.

During the seminar limits to transparency in electoral processes will also be analyzed. According to Schedler (2009):

“The organization of political elections can never be entirely transparent.” There will always be acts and decisions that we can not be observed, from an individual and collective perspective. For example, an election can be open to critical inspection by opposition parties, civil associations, and the mass media. However, from the perspective of individual actors, either candidates or citizens, there will always be a grey area. In order to examine this issue, it is important to have faith in the words of others”⁵.

In summary, the role of the electoral authority should be to implement mechanisms to increase levels of public confidence in the electoral process.

Political Implications of Technical Processes

Adjectives that accompany elections are those that stem from technical qualifications of the electoral process such as “regular”, “clean”, “pacific”, “free” “equal”, and “competitive,” among others. Regular, clean, equal, and competitive elections refer to those that respect legality, provide access to information for participants, and allow for the equal participation and competition in a pacific climate where votes are counted rigorously and results are provided in a timely manner. All of these electoral technical spheres, which are in the hands of the electoral authority, end up being those that hold value for the existence and quality of democracy in a country. As such, for the consolidation of democracy it is vital for actors to accept election results⁶.

The political implications of technical processes are strictly linked to the first point of the Second Training Seminar’s basic course, which is the changing role of the electoral authority, from an organ inherently technical to assuming the political effects of its actions. This expansive role entails adequate awareness and training to project, execute, and respond to technical processes viewing the political effects that they cause.

⁴ The OAS has implemented the “Guide for Mechanisms that Promote Transparency and Integrity in Countries of the Americas” with concrete objectives in executing norms adopted.

OAS http://www.oas.org/sap/espanol/cpo_guia_acerca2.asp

⁵ Contaminating Inconsistencies: Electoral Governance and Post-Electoral Conflict in the 2006 Presidential Election, Andreas Schedler, CIDE 2009.

⁶ Ibid.

As such, “inconsistencies in electoral processes tend to generate ‘genuine doubts’ on clean elections. Additionally, they provide losing parties and candidates invaluable material to ‘generate strategies’ of genuine doubts regarding the electoral process.”⁷

In light of this situation, inconsistencies and the existence, or not, of genuine “doubts” are elements that provide groups who are unsatisfied with electoral results the ability to question the outcome. Therefore, a key strategy is to discredit the work of the electoral authority. It is vital for electoral authorities to anticipate possible questioning (technical but with political ramifications), and create safeguards for technical processes in organizing an election.

TOPIC 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING

- *The information for this sections has been provided by Mr. Jeff Fischer, international electoral researcher and lecturer, expert consulted for the Third Inter-American Training Seminar on the topic of “Electoral Management Body Strategic Planning”.*

ELECTORAL PLANNING: a strategic approach

Rationale for Electoral Planning

There are three levels of planning which are relevant to Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs): 1) strategic; 2) operational; and 3) political. A strategic electoral plan defines the vision, mission, and guiding principles for the EMB and its approach to electoral administration. Operational planning addresses the technical aspects of electoral administration such as procurement, logistics, information technology (IT), facilities, and communications and political planning involves the EMB’s relationship management with political parties, election monitors, and media organizations in a fashion that maintains transparency and confidence in the electoral outcomes.

Strategic Electoral Planning

While strategic planning is commonly employed in the private sector, research into strategic planning by EMBs reveals that there are relatively few instances and guidelines on the topic. Since EMBs are mandated or expected to implement new technologies, expand services to marginalized electorates, and improve the technical efficiency and democratic quality of elections, strategic planning is of utmost importance.

The purpose of strategic planning is fourfold:

⁷ Ibid.

- Provide a framework and focus for organizational improvement efforts;
- Optimize the organizational systems within the election authority;
- Provide guidance to managers for day-to-day decisions;
- Provide a means to assess progress in meeting goals and objectives.⁸

As such, a strategic plan can be defined as “a practical, action-oriented guide based on an examination of internal and external factors that directs goal-setting and resource allocation to achieve meaningful results over time.”⁹ The strategic plan identifies organizational priorities, guides the effective use of human, financial and material resources, and establishes contingencies in cases of operational gaps or failures. There is generally a three-to-five year horizon for such strategic plans.

It is also important to point out that strategic planning is based on EMBs’ assumptions, according to their experience and knowledge, on how current and future events are likely to impact their activities. These assumptions should reflect the findings of an organizational assessment conducted to identify the EMB’s institutional strengths and weaknesses. The assessment is intended to identify gaps between where the EMB stands at the present time and its developmental and performance objectives over the planning horizon. There are three major themes to a strategic plan:

1) vision, 2) mission; and 3) guiding principles.

Vision is a profile defined by the EMB on its public role and future objectives. By developing a vision, the EMB can determine how its services are currently delivered and will be delivered in the future. Developing a vision for the EMB involves three fundamental questions:

- What are the aspirations of the EMB?
- How does the EMB want to be perceived by the public, political stakeholders, and its own staff?
- How does the EMB enhance the quality of democracy for the constituency that it serves?

The **mission statement** describes the purpose, responsibilities, and functions of the EMB. Mission statements frequently include words such as: “conduct,” “provide,” “ensure,” “increase,” “prevent,” and “eliminate.” The mission statement should identify the EMB’s constituency and the programs it maintains to serve this constituency. It can also include identifying the expectations of the EMB by political stakeholders and how the EMB intends to fulfill these expectations. For example, in its Corporate Plan (2007-2008), the Electoral Commission of the United Kingdom’s “Statement of Corporate Purpose” is “To foster public confidence and participation in the democratic process within the United Kingdom.”¹⁰

⁸ Baxter, Joe, *Strategic Planning for Elections*, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

⁹ Baxter, Joe, *Strategic Planning for Elections*, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

¹⁰ Electoral Commission of the United Kingdom, Corporate Plan, (2003)

Guiding principles reflect the philosophy by which the EMB conducts its operations. The principles should address the EMB’s values concerning people (staff and public), processes (management and decision-making), and performance (evaluation criteria). For example, in the Five Year Strategic Plan (2010-2014) of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the following guiding principles are cited:

- Independence;
- Impartiality;
- Transparency;
- Integrity;
- Inclusion of Marginalized Groups;
- Professional Excellence;
- Good Working Conditions; and
- Gender Balance¹¹

Moreover, it is important that the plan identifies the strategic issues and objectives of the EMB. Strategic issues may be internal in nature, such as the revision of the voter registry; or external in nature, such as halting attempts at election official bribery. The strategic issues may be long-term in nature, such as implementing new technologies in and networking the networking of sub-national election offices. Strategic objectives emerge from the needs identified in these issues.

Milestones or performance measures should be assigned in order to assess the progress made by the EMB towards meeting its goals. For example, the Electoral Commission of the United Kingdom identifies six fundamental goals for the organization: 1) promoting transparency in political financing; 2) encouraging best electoral practices; 3) promoting greater electoral participation; 4) ensuring capacity to conduct referenda; 5) providing electoral equality throughout its jurisdiction; and 6) carrying out the Commission’s mandate in an efficient manner. For each of these goals, performance indicators are assigned. These performance indicators are divided into “impact” and “output” indicators. In order to enhance transparency in political financing, the Commission identifies the following performance indicators:

Impact Indicator

Increased acceptance of the financial probity of political parties and election representative through greater transparency.

Output Indicators

- a. Extent to which parties and others submit their return within the statutory deadlines

¹¹ Election Commission of Pakistan, *Five Year Strategic Plan (2010-2015)*

- b. Number of compliance reviews completed
- c. Percentage of compliance reviews completed on time
- d. Number of reviews that lead to further guidance and instruction
- e. Number of compliance visits completed
- f. Percentage of visits that resulted in further guidance being provided¹²

The strategic plan should include contingencies to address operational gaps or failures. It recognizes that operational problems will occur and contingencies have been identified to reduce the impact of these gaps and failures on the quality of the election.

The written strategic plan can be organized into eight sections: 1) Introduction by EMB chair; 2) Executive Summary; 3) Mission and Vision Statements; 4) Organizational Profile and History; 5) Strategic issues and Strategies; 6) Program Goals and Objectives; 7) Management Goals and Objectives; and 8) Performance Indicators.

However, while the strategic planning “product”, (the strategic plan), is an obvious output, the process by which this plan is developed is also critical for its wide acceptance and implementation within the EMB. In developing strategic plans, it is not uncommon for an EMB to establish a committee, representative of the organization, to oversee its creation. For example, in Pakistan the Election Commission established a 19-member Strategic Planning Committee that included a seven-member core group, two-member secretariat, and other staff and experts to develop the Commission’s first strategic plan. The planning process can also include an international component. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a workshop with the Central Election Commission of Moldova on strategic and financial planning. The curriculum employed came from the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) program of the United Nations (UN) and other organizations.

The plan development process follows five steps:

- Step One: Organizational Assessment
- Step Two: Identifying Strategic Foundations (Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles)
- Step Three: Identifying Strategic Issues and Objectives
- Step Four: Writing the Strategic Plan
- Step Five: Developing Implementation Action Plans

The strategic plan can also be available as a public document. In the case of Elections Quebec, the 2001-2005 Strategic Plan was printed in a brochure format that included an electoral calendar handout. In this document, the EMB communicates its institutional profile, vision, values, and orientations to the public. The plan discusses relevant trends in demographics, technology, politics, and electoral administration. It also describes some of

¹² Electoral Commission of the United Kingdom, *Corporate Plan* (2003)

the technical aspects of electoral systems such as voter eligibility and the voter registry as a tool for voter education.¹³

The strategic plan is implemented following the Action Plans developed by the organization’s units, departments, and assisting agencies included in the strategic scope of the document. These Actions Plans connect the strategic planning process to that of operational planning. Action plans should assign implementation responsibilities, identify specific implementation steps, and assign time values for each task.

Election Operational Planning

Operational planning takes the Action Plans and defines the timing and resource requirements to fulfill the electoral mandate. It is intended to implement the strategic objectives of the EMB. On a functional basis, operational planning should cover electoral operations, voter education, electoral security, election worker training, and financial management.

The table below summaries some of the content in each functional area.

**Table I
Operational Planning**

Electoral Operations	Voter Education	Electoral Security	Training	Financial Management
Procurement and materials requirements	Audiences	Threat analysis	Training audiences	Operational budget and cash flow requirements
Registration and voting operations	Messages	Tactical response to threats	Syllabus	Diffuse resources from other agencies
Facilities management	Media	Electoral security of stakeholders	Teaching techniques	International, bilateral, or in-kind assistance
IT and communications	Misinformation and rumor control		Testing	

In its Planning Framework, Elections British Columbia organizes its planning initiatives along three lines - Events, Programs, and Projects as shown in the table below.

¹³ Elections Quebec, *Strategic Plan – 2001 to 2005*

**Table II
Planning Framework
Election British Columbia**

Events	Programs	Projects
Elections	Executive	Project Management
By-elections	Planning and Event Services	Risk Management
Enumerations	Geographic and Voter Data Services	Change Management
Referenda	Electoral Finance	Communications Management
Recalls	Information Technology	Resource Management
Initiatives	Human Resources and Training	Issue Management
Plebiscites		Quality Managements ¹⁴

The operational plan should include a staffing table for regular national and sub-national staff as well as the human resource requirements for voter registration, Election Day, post-election ballot tabulation, and asset retrieval.¹⁵

Political Planning for Elections

Political planning defines the protocols and relationships with political contestants, election monitors, and media organizations. Political planning includes establishing mechanisms and electoral briefings for these electoral stakeholders. Candidate vetting and registration may also be included in political planning activities. Political planning is critical to contingency planning because when problems occur EMBs should have mechanisms in place to assure stakeholders that remedies are being put into place.

Final remarks:

While strategic planning resources for EMBs may be limited, there is still a general consensus on the importance, features, and organization of strategic plans. These common features include the fundamental themes of a strategic plan, that is, defining the organization’s vision, values, and guiding principles. The literature agrees that the process by which strategic planning is conducted must be inclusive in order for the plan to be effectively implemented. Strategic planning should include a contingency component so that the EMB can anticipate where problems may occur and have ready responses to those situations. It is also important that strategic plans include monitoring and evaluation components so that the EMB can measure its performance in relation to the set objectives.

¹⁴ Elections British Columbia, *EBC Planning Framework*

¹⁵ Joint Electoral Management Body, *Afghanistan Presidential Election Operational Plan Outline*, 2004

TOPIC 2: GEOREFERENCING FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES

- *The information presented in this section has been provided by Mr. Miguel Angel Rojano, Director of Cartography at the Federal Electoral Registry of Voters in Mexico.*

The theme of the "georeferencing" for electoral purposes is addressed in the seminar from two thematic approaches: 1) georeferencing and political representation and 2) georeferencing for purposes of logistics and electoral coverage.

The term "georeference" applies to the relationship between an object and its relation to the geographical environment in which it is located. From this definition, it can be inferred that, for instance, georeferencing of an address, when it is associated with the geographic location of that place on the earth's surface, it can be expressed in coordinates defined in a system of reference previously agreed upon, such as the Cartesian system. However, there are multiple reference systems that are used to locate places on the Earth's surface.

In this case, georeferencing analyzed in terms of political representation, focuses on the analysis of the technical challenges involved in building an electoral framework that allows for the territorial association of the votes of the electors to the constituencies in which these votes are accounted for the election of their representatives, where such a framework must meet certain standards of construction as defined below:

- a) Balance in the number of voters by geographical constituencies.
- b) Measures to prevent "gerrymandering"
- c) Prevent discontinuous territorial constituencies
- d) Promoting the participation of indigenous minorities
- e) Demarcation of geographical constituencies with good accessibility in the interior
- f) Encourage the development of constituencies that respect, as much as possible, the integrity of the municipalities
- g) How to address the problems of geographical accessibility.
- h) Take into account factors as time and distance in the demarcation of constituencies.
- i) Automation of the processes to construct the constituencies and mechanisms for combined analysis.
- j) Procedures to evaluate the different scenarios in an objective and systematic manner

A brief description of these concepts:

- a) Balance in the number of electors by geographical constituencies.

In demarcation of constituencies, one of the most important aspects to consider is the search for districts with a similar number of electors and inhabitants, so that the representation of the votes is as homogeneous as possible. Hence, geographical information systems provide some analysis tools that allow for the construction of regions under this criteria.

b) Measures to prevent “Gerrymandering”

Gerrymandering Is a form of drawing electoral boundaries so that the integration of voters within these boundaries aims to promote/favor a particular political force, to the detriment of the rest. Also known as “salamander effect.”

c) Avoid discontinuous territorial constituencies

Geographical continuity of electoral districts is an assumption based on the idea that to the possible extent, electoral districts allow for the free movement of the members of such district, without going beyond the borders of the electoral constituency. This also allows for establishing communication links in the region and facilitating the voting processes and transferring of electoral material. Similarly, it prevents the possible construction of districts in arbitrary shapes with geographically isolated areas which tend to favor any particular political force at the expense of the rest.

d) Promoting the participation of indigenous minorities

Recently, in the Mexican Constitution, measures to promote the participation of members of indigenous groups were introduced. Some of these measures attempt to prevent, to the extent possible, the separation of communities within the electoral districts. Some aspects to consider, no less important, are: how to identify these communities and their settlements, and how to promote the participation of these groups considering their culture.

e) Build geographical constituencies with good internal accessibility

It is important to reflect on the geographical diversity that a particular country has for the construction of districts with good internal accessibility. It is also important to take into account the way in which modern technology can aid in the analysis of the roads.

f) Promote the development of constituencies, while respecting, as much as possible, the integrity of municipalities

The municipality, as a form of organization for public administration, is of great relevance for building constituencies. However, given the diversity of shapes and sizes that these geographical and administrative units have, building districts that respect territorial integrity is a task that poses great challenges.

g) How to address the problem associated to geographical accessibility.

The topography, hydrographic conditions and climate of a region are all aspects of great operational relevance for building constituencies. Taking these aspects into account can

have a strong impact on campaign costs, distribution of electoral materials, selection of polling officials and many other logistical aspects. This topic will reflect on how to consider these elements and some methods to quantify these variables.

h) Considering transit- time and distances in the building of constituencies.

The transit time and distance are variables directly related to the issue of accessibility to a particular region. The way to build information networks will be a topic addressed in the seminar.

i) Automation of processes for the demarcation of constituencies and mechanisms of combined analysis

This section will discuss algorithms of combined analysis that have been used for the construction of districts or regions. The problems faced by the large number of alternatives that can be considered will be also presented, explaining what justifies the search for solutions in advanced mathematics.

j) Procedures to evaluate scenarios in an objective and systematic manner

The construction of software systems that combine the benefits of geographic information systems and complex numerical processes give the specialist the opportunity to use these comprehensive digital to draw limits in areas using multiple criteria to evaluate the options. This section will comment on the experience of the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE) in implementing these tools.

GEOREFERENCING FOR THE PURPOSES OF ELECTORAL LOGISTICAL COVERAGE

In this section, georeferencing is analyzed in terms of logistics and electoral coverage, placing an emphasis on the analysis of the technical challenges involved in building procedures and tools that allow for the association of a particular territory with the local services that facilitate access to polling centers, especially in regions where the geographic conditions, such as dispersion, pose a particular challenge for people to vote.

Some of the Issues that need to be considered are:

a) Construction of geographical electoral frame

This section will provide an overview of how the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico has built its digital mapping system by incorporating cartographic information from the NEGI census of 1990 and the pre-existing National Register of Electors.

b) GIS systems and electoral geography

This section will provide information on the characteristics that a cartography needs to have to be used as an electoral framework of reference, according to Mexican law, and national and international standards that are followed to make it compatible with other platforms.

c) Continuous updating of the geographical electoral

The procedures that have evolved from 1990 to date in the construction and updating of the electoral map in the IFE.

What information is relevant from an electoral approach?

What kind of information should be incorporated into the electoral mapping and what data is relevant for the work of organizing the election and having an updated and reliable voter's registry?

c) Description of electoral domicile

In this section will provide information to justify the technical-legal definition of "electoral domicile". With the aim that from this concept, more attention be given to the work of updating electoral mapping information available, as well as voter's registries.

d) Problems related to political and geo-electoral boundaries

The geography of a country is dynamic, constantly changing and thus historic background information is not always possible to reconcile.

This section will address the problems involve in the demarcation of political and administrative territories, and its impact on the delimitation of constituencies.

e) Access to geo-electoral information through the Internet

Electronic communications facilitate access to information a better understanding of the electoral constituencies. This topic will discuss how web portals and the access to the services they provide can be useful sources of information for electoral mapping..

f) Services to the public in regard to its electoral

How can services with relevant electoral-geographic information can be used, taking advantage of the SMS services?

g) "Cloud computing" and geo-electoral referencing

How agreements of cooperation between electoral authorities and Internet service

companies such as Google, allow for the construction of advanced information systems with the possibility of a virtually unrestricted access to geographic databases to the general public.

h) Systems of geographic information and electoral routes

The use of geographical information systems for the construction of roads and transit networks allows for the analysis of electoral routes and improves the logistics in the organization of field work.

LOOKING FORWARD: FOLLOW UP ON THE SEMINAR

This Training Seminar was not designed as a training event with a definite start and end. It is the beginning of a continuous training process through different activities connected between each other and that share a common objective: improving the capacities of the electoral authorities.

For this reason the seminar incorporates various follow up tools mechanisms such as: the dissemination of materials and presentations of the seminar, follow up of electoral authorities' projects through the Inter-American Network of Election Practices (RIPE), Web page through which the participants can continue sharing their knowledge and information available about the topics of the conference and the status of the implementation of their projects.

Another initiative to continue strengthening the work of the conference is the design of virtual courses, and an "Advance Course on American Electoral Process" developed in collaboration with FLACSO Chile and the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico. This advance course is an additional initiative, through which the OAS General Secretariat hopes to continue strengthening the technical capacities of the electoral authorities, with the aim that this effort will be a valuable contribution for the continuous strengthening of democratic systems in the region.

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